

Mr. TATE. Mr. Speaker, why are the Democrats scared of discussing the real issues of the day? Why are the Democrats scared to engaged in a real discussion about the issues of importance to the American people—like the balanced budget amendment and unfunded mandate legislation.

The American people sent a clear message to us in November to clean up Congress. We are working hard to do just that. Republicans will keep their promise to the American people to change the culture of Washington.

I'd say to my Democrat colleagues, start working to change Congress, and stop working so hard to change the subject.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

(Mr. EDWARDS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, while there is no scheduled business on the floor of this House today, I can think of fewer issues more important to discuss here than freedom of speech. I believe debate on this floor should be conducted with respect and dignity. Yet if this House were to impose a gag rule on free and open debate, it would be a genuine tragedy for our democracy.

Mr. Speaker, this is the people's House and the people have the right to have their voice heard through their elected Representatives.

If Members of this House were to fear that honest expressions of fact and philosophy might be denied on this floor, then we will have done our democracy and the freedom of speech so deeply embedded in our Constitution a great disservice.

ARGUE SUBSTANCE, NOT SMOKESCREEN

(Mr. KINGSTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KINGSTON. You know, if you cannot argue substance, attack the person; if you cannot argue substance, you make outrageous and frivolous claims; and if you cannot argue substance, you throw out smokecreens and red herrings. That is what seems to be the tack of the Democrat Party today.

You know, we need your help, we need it on the balanced budget amendment. You cannot balance the budget by frequent flyer points. We need your help on unfunded mandates. Granted, most of them came from your party. The mayors and the county commissioners across America want relief. We need your help on ethics. Maybe you can find time to talk to Mr. GEPHARDT to get your side of the aisle moving on ethics. We need your help on welfare reform. Maybe you have some ideas. You have great rhetoric. We are now interested in your ideas. I hope you will put your ideas in front of your party

interests and work for the betterment of America.

WE COULD HAVE VOTED TODAY ON SUBSTANTIVE LEGISLATION

(Mr. DEFAZIO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, referring to a couple of speakers before us, they somehow claim that we are delaying the activities of the House. The House is in pro forma session today. That means those of us who flew across the United States to attend this session, there will be no recorded votes or there should be only procedural matters. There is no substantive legislation before us. The unfunded mandates bill is not before us, because it has been delayed by the majority. The majority told us all bills will come before the House with open rules. Well, if you want to bring your unfunded mandate bill up with an open rule, what is the problem? We could be in session right now doing unfunded mandates, but you have us waiting for the Rules Committee because they want to restrict debate on unfunded mandates.

Where is the balanced budget amendment, the balanced budget amendment we were promised you would come forward with?

I am a cosponsor of a bipartisan version. Where is it? It is hung up by the majority because they want to insist on a super majority for taxes in that proposal. It is your holdup, not ours.

WHERE IS THE BEEF?

(Mr. LIVINGSTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LIVINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I have come late to this debacle on the floor today, but I cannot resist commenting on the irony of the concern about the much-vaunted Speaker's nonbook deal.

Now, find me one American citizen who has turned down \$4.5 or \$3 million, perhaps, or even \$1 million when they might have gotten such a good deal. The fact is Speaker GINGRICH turned it down, and yet to avoid confronting the issues important to the American people that they voted for in the last election, the minority party—excuse me, the minority party—has now said that this is the most important thing that must be discussed. No comment about Speaker Wright's problems with his sales of his book to lobbyists; no comment about the Vice President's very lucrative book deal, but let us concentrate on this that is a nonbook deal. There has been no money here.

Where is the beef, folks? Get real.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH IN CONGRESS

(Mr. MENENDEZ asked and was given permission to address the House

for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I am not quite sure under your ruling that I can even refer to the Speaker in any respect, but as someone who came to the floor today to vote when the vote was called, I did not expect to speak. But as someone whose family has fled from oppression in search of freedom and democracy, I am appalled at what could happen in the greatest hall of democracy in the world. But I have seen it today.

You can question the motives of a whole group of people, put their motives in question, but you cannot question the motive of an individual who is in a leadership position and determines the agenda of this House.

You can pass a Congressional Accountability Act, yet you cannot call for the accountability of an individual who leads the House and seek its disclosure. This is not about an individual's book deal who may be paid by royalties and the \$4 million is coming. But it is about public licenses, public airwaves. It is about our national treasures, and you are denying one of the greatest national treasures, the ability of Members to speak in this House freely.

WE HAVE BEEN GAGGED

(Mr. WISE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. WISE. Mr. Speaker, today, in 14 years of legislative work that I have done in State and Federal out of legislatures, is the saddest day I have ever seen. I feel effectively gagged.

Let me ask a question, Mr. Speaker: If anyone was reported to have signed a \$4.5 million deal to write a book, if any Member was reported to have met with an interested party who possibly had interests affected by the Congress, if any Member had had legitimate questions raised in the public media and in editorials about his or her conduct, should it not be discussed on this floor?

But now we have to tell the American people, "Read your newspapers, watch your television, they can tell you what is happening. They can ask questions about the conduct of any Member of this House, including its Speaker. Follow your media, they can tell you what your elected House Members," myself included, "cannot tell you because the Republican gag rule says that we are out of order."

WE ARE FOLLOWING THE RULES OF THE HOUSE

(Mr. SENSENBRENNER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, yes, today has been a debacle, and a debacle because I think of people not the reading the rules that we have been living under for as long as I have been